

VS23 - Epicurus Reader Version

Post by "Don" of April 5, 2026 at 6:25 PM

I think we're understandably butting up against a Greek vs English issue here.

Granted ἀρετή is translated as "excellence" in English; however, it's not an adjective like "excellent" as in "Our friendship is excellent."

ἀρετή can be [variously translated into English](#): goodness, excellence, of any kind, in Hom. esp. of manly qualities; [as well as](#) goodness, excellence; manliness, prowess, rank, valour; (not countable): virtue; (countable): a virtue, the virtues

It's like trying to shoehorn "eudaimonia" into "happiness."

Think of "arete" as the "full realization of potential or inherent function."

My take on this, from looking at various sources, is that - if we're taking the manuscript at face value - Epicurus saw friendship as one of the most important instrumental virtues leading to a happy life. I *may* even go so far as to his using the similarity of ἀρετή (virtue/excellence) and ἀρετή (choiceworthy) as part of his wordplay that I find so endearing about some of his writing. Friendship is "choiceworthy" exactly because it is a key component of living to one's full potential, of achieving "arete."

For a way deeper dive than any of us want likely, here's an open access book: [Arete in Plato and Aristotle: Selected Essays from the 6th Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Hellenic Heritage of Sicily and Southern Italy](#)